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- Harz, Hans-Peter
67373 Dudenhofen (DE)
- Betz, Roland Jürgen
67150 Niederkirchen (DE)

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(71) Applicant: GIST-BROCADES B.V.
NL-2600 MA Delft (NL)(74) Representative: Klein, Bart et al
Gist-Brocades,
Patents Trademarks Department,
Wateringseweg 1,
P.O. Box 1
2600 MA Delft (NL)(72) Inventors:
• Barendse, Rudolf Carolus Maria
2613 CM Delft (NL)

(54) Salt-stabilized enzyme preparations

(57) The present invention discloses methods to improve the processing and storage stability of dry enzyme preparations. To this extend an inorganic salt, e.g. $MgSO_4$, is dissolved in an enzyme containing solution which is subsequently dried, using e.g. spray drying. Not only does the addition of salt improve the yield of enzyme activity upon drying, also the storage and processing stability of the obtained solid composition containing the enzyme and the inorganic salt are improved with respect to enzyme activity. The invention further discloses solid compositions comprising enzymes and inorganic salts.

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Description

Field of the invention

The present invention relates to the conversion of enzyme solutions to solid enzyme preparations with improved drying yield, and storage and processing stability.

Background of the invention

The width of the application field and therefore the importance of enzymes in modern technology is increasing rapidly. One of the major drawbacks of these compounds however, is their aptitude to deactivation, caused not only by extremes of temperature, pH and the like during processing, but also occurring spontaneously on prolonged storage under otherwise normal conditions.

Often applied methods known in the art to diminish this problem include the use of a variety of additives claimed to stabilize enzymes in solution or the conversion of the enzyme solution to a dry formulation by means of freeze drying, spray drying or other techniques suitable for this purpose. The conversion of an enzyme in solution to a dry form is often obligatory when the application so demands (e.g. convenient mixing with other dry components).

Although drying in itself is a valuable tool in the improvement of the enzyme storage stability, the process step itself often causes a substantial loss of activity and the final product is still susceptible to inactivation. This activity loss during storage or processing is strongly dependent on moisture content of the preparation and this therefore has to be most stringently controlled to maintain the so valued product stability. This also includes a severe reduction of choice in the compounds suited for addition to the final enzyme product for the sake of standardization or other purposes.

In a variety of cases the dry enzyme is intended for applications in which the enzyme has to be incorporated in a product in which the moisture content can not be so strictly controlled. In these cases the enzyme stability is then severely reduced.

Several inventions have been made in the field of stabilizing enzymes against losses during drying and subsequent storage and handling.

The bulk of these inventions (such as presented in the patent (applications) US 3515642, EP 0501375A1 and WO 91/14773) are concerned with the addition of carbohydrate and, more specific, sugar or polyol components to the enzyme concentrate.

Also known in the art is the inclusion of components into the formulation with the aim to produce a glassy product at storage temperature, thus improving enzyme stability (EP 0383569A2).

Another approach is the addition to the formulation of one or several components able to bind moisture. This will reduce the water activity of the final preparation or temporarily prevent the interaction of water penetrating from the surroundings with the enzyme itself.

The use of organic and inorganic salts as a processing aid (e.g. to improve flowing behaviour of the product) or bulking/standardizing agent is well known. However, the use of inorganic salts to improve stability of dry enzyme preparations during processing or storage does not appear to be described in the art. In some cases enzyme destabilisation due to salt addition was even specifically mentioned (see e.g. Mikhailova et al. 1989, Vests Akad Navuk BSSR, Ser Biyal Navuk 8: 62-65).

EP 0522269A2 discloses the addition of insoluble calcium carbonate to an enzyme solution to be spraydried.

WO 92/11347 discloses the incorporation of water soluble inorganic salts into enzyme containing granulates. The water soluble inorganic salts must be chosen such that they do not affect the storage stability of the enzyme granulate. WO 92/11347 provides several sodium- and potassium-salts as being suitable for this purpose. The water soluble inorganic salts are however added to the enzymes in dry form prior to their granulation by extrusion.

Description of the invention

The present invention provides a method for the production of solid enzyme formulations with improved drying yield and improved storage and processing stability of the resulting products. This is achieved by preparing a solution comprising an enzyme and a water soluble inorganic salt, preferably an inorganic salt of a divalent cation, more preferably zinc, magnesium or calcium salt, most preferably zinc or magnesium sulphate, and subsequent drying of the product. Also a combination of salts as well as a combination of enzymes can be used for this purpose. Divalent cations are preferred because they provide the best storage and processing stability. Sulphate is preferred as anion because it provides the best drying yield. The invention also provides solid enzyme formulations obtained by preparing a solution comprising an enzyme and a water soluble inorganic salt, preferably an inorganic salt of a divalent cation, more preferably zinc, magnesium or calcium salt, most preferably zinc or magnesium sulphate, and subsequent drying of the solution comprising the enzyme and the water soluble inorganic salt.

In the method of the invention, the salt is present while the enzyme is still in solution, i.e. prior to drying. Not only

does this results in a higher yield during drying, but also the storage stability of the obtained dry enzyme preparations is improved as well as their processing stability. Processing stability is herein understood to mean the stability of the enzyme preparation during any handling of the enzyme preparation other than storage, such as e.g. the mixing of the enzyme preparation with other components or during the application of the enzyme.

Drying of the solution containing the enzyme and the salt will result in a solid composition which is homogeneous with respect to the distribution of the enzyme and the salt.

The drying of the enzyme and salt containing solution can be achieved by any drying method available to the skilled person, such as spray-drying, freeze drying, vacuum drying, fluid bed drying, and microwave drying. Drying of the enzyme-salt solution can also be combined with granulation methods which comprise e.g. the use of a fluid bed or a Multi-stage dryer (MSD). In case of the use of these granulation methods, the skilled person will understand that the obtained composition is not necessarily completely homogeneous. The obtained particles will usually consist of agglomerates of homogeneous particles or will consist of coated particles with a homogeneous core, with a homogeneous coating and/or combinations thereof. In any case there will be a homogeneous interdispersion of the enzyme and the salt with respect to each other.

The specific examples of the invention demonstrate that the stabilising effect of the salt increases with increasing dosage of the salt to the enzyme solution, until at a certain point further increases in salt dosage no longer produce further improvement of the enzyme stability. For this reason at least 5%, preferably at least 15%, more preferably at least 30%, still more preferably at least 60%, and most preferably at least 90% (w/w) of salt is added to the enzyme solution, wherein the salt dosage is expressed as the weight percentage (w/w) of added salt based on the weight of the enzyme in solution, not including the weight of the crystal water of the salt crystals.

Although there is no upper limit to the addition of the salt from the view of the invention, a physical limit results from the maximum solubility of the salt in the enzyme concentrate. Higher salt/enzyme ratios can then only be realized by dilution of the enzyme solution or the use of a combination of salts.

Another point of consideration might be the dosage at which the enzyme is 'salted out', this being dependent on both the type of salt and the specific enzyme under consideration. Combinations of salts and enzymes giving rise to the 'salting out'-phenomenon are not excluded from the invention.

The invention can be used with enzymes or mixtures of enzymes from any type, including but not limited to phytases and other phosphatases, amylases, proteases, lipases and phospholipases, cellulases such as β -glucanases, pectinases, hemicellulases such as xylanases and other plant-cell wall degrading enzymes, esterases, rhamnases such as fungal proteases or chrysinin, and β -galactosidases. It is to be understood that whenever referred to the enzyme or an enzyme, also mixtures of enzymes are included in these terms, irrespective of whether such mixtures are obtainable directly in a single fermentation or by mixing enzymes obtainable in different fermentations; and further including enzymes obtainable by fermentation of recombinant organisms.

The enzyme is preferably selected from the group comprising fungal phytases, fungal hemicellulases, fungal cellulases and bacterial proteases. More preferably the enzyme is selected from the group comprising phytases and endo-xylanases derivable from a fungus which belongs to the *Aspergillus niger* Group as defined by Raper and Fennell (1965, In: The Genus *Aspergillus*, The Williams & Wilkins Company, Baltimore, pp 293-344), β -glucanases and endo-xylanases derivable from a *Trichoderma* species, and proteases derivable from *Bacillus* species.

The invention also discloses solid compositions comprising at least one enzyme and an inorganic salt, wherein the dosage of the inorganic salt is at least 5% (w/w) of the weight of the enzyme(s). Preferably the inorganic salt is a salt of a divalent cation, more preferably zinc, magnesium or calcium salt, most preferably zinc or magnesium sulphate. The dosage of the inorganic salt in the composition is at least 5% (w/w), preferably at least 15%, more preferably at least 30%, still more preferably at least 60% and most preferably at least 90% of the weight of the enzyme(s). Enzymes which may be prepared in compositions according to the invention include all those mentioned above, particularly those which are preferred.

In a further embodiment of the invention the above described solid compositions are used to prepare an animal feed. The preparation of animal feed often includes a pelleting step during which a significant amount of enzyme activity can be lost. The use of the solid composition of the invention reduces these losses in enzyme activity during pelleting. Typically an animal feed composition comprises raw materials of vegetable origin providing energy and metabolites for growth. The feed is supplemented with minerals and vitamins and it is common to add animal fat and animal proteins to the feed.

In yet another embodiment of the invention, a solid composition comprising a phytase with a improved storage stability is disclosed. The storage stability of the phytase in this solid composition is such that upon storage during 8 weeks, preferably in a closed container, at 30°C, less than 35%, preferably less than 20%, more preferably less than 10% and most preferably less than 5% of the initial phytase activity is lost. The phytase compositions may comprise an organic or inorganic physiologically acceptable carrier (e.g. grain-based carriers like wheat middlings, wheat flour, rice hulls, and soon, other organic carriers like tapioca, potato starch, cane sugar and so on, inorganic carriers like sodium chloride, potassium sulphate, silica and so on), in combination with phytase enzyme, possibly combined with other enzymes for functionalities' or conveniences' sake, and agents to further improve the products' appearance or functionality with

respect to colour, flowing behaviour, physical, chemical or microbial stability, smell, taste, dust formation and so on. The skilled person will understand that similar compositions can be made for feed-enzymes other than phytase.

The following examples are provided by way of illustration of the invention.

Examples

Example 1

A fungal phytase concentrate (as produced by and obtainable from Gist-brocades) containing approximately 11% of enzyme by weight was split into two portions. To one portion 240 g/l of $MgSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$ was added. After dissolution of the salt, resulting in a clear solution, both solutions were spray dried using a Buchi lab scale spray drier with inlet temperature of 130°C and outlet temperature of 85°C.

The resulting powders were mixed with wheat middlings in a weight ratio of 1:10 to neutralize any differences in water activity between the preparations. After equilibration this was confirmed by measurement of the water activities, which both were found to be 0.45 at room temperature.

The final products were then stored at 30°C in closed jars and after storage the products were simultaneously analyzed for enzyme activity. After eight weeks of storage the activity loss of the preparation without salt addition amounted to 35%, against only 5% loss for the preparation with salt addition.

Example 2

Into separate portions of a concentrate of a *Bacillus*-derived alkaline protease (as produced by and obtainable from Genencor International Inc.) containing approximately 12% of enzyme protein by weight, 0 and 65 g/l of $MgSO_4 \cdot 0H_2O$ was dissolved. These concentrates were then coated onto sodium sulphate carrier using a Niro STREA-1 lab scale fluid bed coater. The activity losses for this process step were 26% and 14% respectively.

The resulting particles were mixed with a surplus of bleach-containing commercial detergent powder for the European market and incubated in open jars at 35°C and 55% relative humidity. After 6 weeks of storage the remaining enzyme activity of the preparations was 42% with salt addition and only 30% without.

Example 3

240 g/l of $MgSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$ was dissolved into a portion of *Trichoderma*-derived enzyme concentrate (as produced by and obtainable from Gist-brocades) with a total dry matter content of 25% by weight, containing both a β -glucanase and an endo-xylanase enzyme. The resulting solution and the original concentrate were separately coated onto a sodium sulphate carrier in a Glat WSG-60 fluid bed coater. The process activity losses were 5% and 10% for the β -glucanase and 10% and 25% for the endo-xylanase with and without salt addition respectively.

The resulting particles were incubated at 30°C and 62% relative humidity. After 12 weeks of storage the activity losses for the β -glucanase were 10% and undetectable and for the endo-xylanase the activity losses were 10% and 25%, for each enzyme with and without salt addition, respectively.

The granulates were also incorporated in a feed mixture and subjected to a pilot scale pelleting process at a temperature of 70°C. The β -glucanase activity losses amounted to 46% and 59% and the endo-xylanase losses were 37% and 66% with and without salt addition respectively.

The feed mixture used in the pelleting process was composed of:

Components	% (w/w)
Maize	50.00
Peas (22.9% raw protein)	3.50
Defatted soy (45.5% raw protein)	28.00
Tapioca	2.38
Animal meal (58% raw protein)	3.60
Fish meal (72.7% raw protein)	1.00
Hydrolysed feather meal	1.00
Soy oil	1.75
Animal fat	3.50
Vitamin/mineral premix	3.15
Limestone	0.86
Monocalcium phosphate	0.96
Sodium chloride	0.30

Example 4

Different amounts of magnesium sulphate were dissolved in 100 ml of demineralized water after which 100 ml of a fungal phytase concentrate (as produced by and obtainable from Gist-brocades) containing app. 17% by weight of pure enzyme was added to each portion. After mixing the resulting solutions were spray-dried using a lab-scale Büchi 190 Mini Spray Dryer with inlet/outlet temperatures of 140 and 80°C respectively.

The resulting powders were mixed with wheat middlings in a ratio of 1:9. After equilibration water activity values at 35°C were measured for control sample and sample with highest salt dosage to exclude water activity effects. The mixtures were subsequently incubated in closed bottles at 35°C for 8 weeks, after which activity losses were measured. The results are presented in the following table:

MgSO ₄ -dosage [g/g enzyme]	Mixture Water Activity [-]	Storage losses after 8 weeks at 35°C
0	0.292	52%
0.31	-	37%
0.61	-	26%
1.19	-	15%
1.84	-	15%
2.38	0.303	17%

Example 5

According to the same protocol as mentioned in example 4 different salts in a dosage of 80 mmol per 100 ml of phytase concentrate have been used to produce stabilized enzyme powders. Mixing with wheat middlings and stability testing took place analogously to example 4.

The results are presented in the following table:

Salt type	Water Activity [-]	Spray Drying losses	Storage losses after 8 weeks at 35°C
None	0.29	6%	52%
magnesium sulphate	-	7%	15%
magnesium chloride	0.30	26%	43%
magnesium nitrate	0.31	32%	27%
zinc sulphate	-	5%	9%
zinc chloride	-	48%	5%
calcium chloride	-	40%	18%
calcium nitrate	-	44%	13%
sodium sulphate	-	11%	51%
potassium sulphate	-	17%	36%
ammonium sulphate	-	6%	46%

Example 6

Using the protocol described in Example 5, three phytase containing solutions were prepared containing either no added salt, magnesium sulphate or zinc sulphate. These solutions were subsequently dried using freeze drying instead of spray drying. The freeze drying was accomplished by freezing the mixed enzyme/salt solutions in a flask by submerging the flask in liquid nitrogen, after which high vacuum was applied to remove the water. The resulting dry preparations were crushed in a mortar and mixed with wheat middlings prior to stability testing for 8 weeks at 35 °C in closed bottles. The results are presented in the following Table.

Salt type	Water activity of mixture	Activity losses after 8 weeks at 35°C.
None	0.31	46%
magnesium sulphate	0.31	16%
zinc sulphate	-	3%

Claims

1. A method to improve the processing stability or storage stability of a solid enzyme preparation by drying a solution containing an enzyme and a water soluble inorganic salt, whereby the dosage of the inorganic salt is at least 5% (w/w) of the weight of the enzyme.
2. A method for preparing a storage stable and processing stable solid composition comprising an enzyme, whereby the method comprises the steps of:
 - a) preparing a solution comprising an enzyme and a water soluble inorganic salt, wherein the dosage of the inorganic salt is at least 5% of the weight of the enzyme, and
 - b) drying the solution.
3. A method according to claims 1 or 2, wherein the inorganic salt comprises a divalent cation.

4. A method according to claims 3, wherein the divalent cation is selected from the group consisting of zinc, magnesium and calcium.
5. A method according to any one of claims 1-4, wherein the inorganic salt comprises a sulphate anion.
6. A method according to any one of claims 1-5, wherein the enzyme is selected from the group comprising a phytase preferably from *Aspergillus*, a protease preferably from *Bacillus*, a hemicellulase preferably from *Aspergillus*, a hemicellulase and a cellulase both preferably from *Trichoderma*.
7. A method according to any one of claims 1-6, wherein the drying of the solution containing the enzyme and the inorganic salt comprises the use of a dryer selected from the group consisting of a spray dryer, a fluid-bed dryer and a freeze dryer.
8. A solid composition comprising at least one enzyme and a water soluble inorganic salt, wherein the dosage of the inorganic salt is at least 5% (w/w) of the weight of the enzyme and wherein the inorganic salt comprises a divalent cation.
9. A solid composition obtainable by:
- a) preparing a solution comprising an enzyme and a water soluble inorganic salt, wherein the dosage of the inorganic salt is at least 5% of the weight of the enzyme, and
- b) drying the solution.
10. A solid composition according to claims 8 or 9, wherein the salt is as defined in any one of claims 3-5.
11. A solid composition according to any one of claims 8-10, wherein the enzyme is as defined in claim 6.
12. A solid composition according to any one of claims 8-11, wherein the composition is homogeneous with respect to the distribution of the inorganic salt and the enzyme.
13. A solid composition according to claim 8-11, characterized in that the composition comprises particles which are homogeneous with respect to the distribution of the inorganic salt and the enzyme.
14. A solid composition according to claim 8-11, characterized in that the composition comprises a coating which is homogeneous with respect to the distribution of the inorganic salt and the enzyme.
15. A solid composition comprising a phytase with a storage stability which is characterized in that upon storage of the solid composition during 8 weeks at 30°C, less than 35% of the initial phytase activity is lost.
16. An animal feed comprising a solid composition as defined in any one of claims 8-15.



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 96 20 2071

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
X	EP-A-0 522 269 (BASF AG) * example 2 * ---	1-16	C12N9/96 A23L1/00 C12N9/16 C12N9/24 C12N9/42
X	WO-A-92 11347 (HENKEL KGAA) * page 6, paragraph 1; claims 1,8 * ---	1,9-12	
X	EP-A-0 501 375 (KAO CORP) * examples 1-3 * ---	1-16	
X	INDIAN J BIOCHEM BIOPHYS, 19 (6), 1982 (RECD. 1983), 399-402., XP000609629 SOHONI S S ET AL: "ISOLATION AND CHARACTERIZATION OF A PROTEASE FROM BACILLUS-SUBTILIS" * figure 2 * ---	9-16	
A	WO-A-91 09943 (NOVONORDISK AS) * the whole document * -----		
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6)
			C12N A23L
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	
THE HAGUE		21 November 1996	
		Examiner	
		Espen, J	
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if considered with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		I : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons .. : : number of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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